

## A Comparative Analysis of the Compulsory Education Systems in Turkic Republics

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### Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the compulsory education processes in Turkic Republics. The current study is designed as a descriptive study in the survey model. The data of the study were collected from journals, books, relevant written sources and internet sites through the document analysis technique.

In the study, it was found that in general the compulsory education systems in the Turkic Republics are organized at three levels, require the compulsory attendance of students aged at 6-18 years old and last for 11 or 12 years, and there are some differences in their applications.

The first level of the compulsory education is elementary education covering a four-year period in the Turkic Republics investigated in the current study and the general objectives in this first level are to teach how to adapt to the society and life, reading and writing, and the basic skills of mathematics. The second and third levels of the compulsory education have a similar structure in the Turkic Republics, former parts of the Soviet Union, in that first level of the secondary education is five years and the second level of the secondary education is two years in general. On the other hand, in Turkey, each of the first and second levels of the secondary education lasts four years. It was found that in the general secondary education in all the Turkic Republics, it is aimed to give a general science education, to impart the general cultural characteristics of the society to students and to prepare them for higher education.

**Keywords:** Compulsory education, elementary school, secondary school, high school, general secondary education.

### Introduction

The concept of basic education first introduced by UNESCO in 1950s was first used to refer to the education to be given to adults devoid of education of any kind, but then the meaning of the term underwent a change and now it is used to refer to “the free education to be offered to all citizens by the state to minimize the differences in living standards resulting from the differences in educational opportunities in our age in which education is necessary for survival” (Güven, 2012: 559. Okutan, 2011: 33). This has made basic education necessary for citizenship education. In many countries, there are models of compulsory education covering a certain period of time ranging from eight years to twelve years.

The main objective of the elementary education that is the first level of the compulsory education in Turkey is “to create citizens equipped with the common sentiments and values of the society and showing the volition to live together in future”. Thus, its societal utility is greater than the other levels of education. Therefore, states have always assigned a special importance to this first level of education (Aslan & Yıldırım, 2013).

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Turkic Republics gained their sovereignty and they started democratic development process and to replace communism and its institutions

remaining from the Soviet domination with democracy and its institutions and systems. During this process of transformation, the Turkic republics having gained their independence also initiated reform movements in their education systems to make them more in compliance with their own cultures and histories.

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, a severe economic crisis was experienced in the Turkic Republics and as a result, some economic measures were taken and particularly in education and social services serious problems were experienced. As a result of economic recession experienced during the adoption process of the market economy, teachers' wages decreased and many of them lost their jobs; thus, the quality of educational services deteriorated and many people experienced difficulties in meeting their social and economic needs (OSCE, 2003). Then, some improvements started to be observed in economic and social conditions.

In general, as the compulsory education is a kind of citizenship education, it aims to impart qualifications to individuals so that they can have their economic independence, can adapt to the society and can make at least minimum contribution to the development of the society. In this regard, improving the quality of a society depends a great deal on the importance attached to the compulsory education. Increasing the amount of individuals' time of exposure to the compulsory education will enhance the quality of citizenship.

In the current study, the purpose is to make a structural comparison of the compulsory education systems in the Turkic republics.

### **Methodology**

The current research employing the qualitative research method is a descriptive comparison study. For this purpose, the data were collected from the relevant journals, books and internet sites by using the document analysis technique. The document analysis involves the analysis of written materials including information about the phenomenon or phenomena intended to be investigated. Then the collected data were analyzed through the descriptive analysis technique and interpreted. The descriptive analysis is a qualitative analysis technique used to evaluate the data not requiring in-depth analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

### **Literature Review**

#### ***The Compulsory Education in the Republic of Turkish***

Founded on 29 October 1923, the Turkish Republic is a democratic, secular and social state of law. It has a rich historical and cultural heritage inherited from the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires. Geographically it occupies a strategic position connecting the continents of Asia and Europe.

The governments formed immediately after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic adopted an educational policy aiming to ensure equality of opportunity in education for all the school-age children; thus, to eliminate illiteracy. In the article 87 of the 1924 Constitution of the Turkish Republic, it was stated that elementary education is compulsory and free education should be given to all the Turkish children by the state (Gelişli, 2005).

In accordance with the National Education Basic Law No. 1739, starting from the early childhood period, children should be prepared for life and higher levels of education in line with their interests, talents, developmental and learning characteristics through effective guidance and counseling. In order to be able achieve these objectives, children need to be trained as modern people, good producers and consumers and good citizens who are physically, spiritually and socially healthy (Senemoğlu & Çelik, 2000:186. Cited in Aslan & Yıldırım, 2013).

For ages, the period of compulsory education could not be equated with those of modern societies. In the early years of the Republic, the compulsory education was only 3 years and then it

was increased to 5 years. It was always discussed that for Turkey to be in the league of developed nations, the time of the compulsory education had to be increased; yet, it took a long time to increase the compulsory education from 5 years to 8 years. With the enactment of the elementary education law no. 222 in 1961, the eight-year compulsory education was officially given a start and with the National Education Basic Law No. 1973, the compulsory education was legalized as 8-year continuous education (Güven, 2012: 558; Gelişli, 2005). However, the piloting of this continuous 8-year compulsory education could only be started after the 1980 Military Coup in elementary boarding schools.

Only on 18 July 1997, with the amendments made to the law dated 23.4.1988 and numbered 3418 through the enactment of the law no. 4306 called “Elementary Education Law, The Basic Law of National Education, The Law of Apprenticeship and Vocational Training, The Law of The Organization and Functions of National Education” the elementary education was increased to eight years and eight-year continuous education was initiated all over Turkey. With this law, elementary and secondary schools were combined and they were converted to eight-year continuous compulsory education schools and some changes and revisions made in the programs of elementary education. Thus, for the first time, as different from the previous elementary school programs, the curriculums were separately made for each school subject (Gelişli, 2005).

In 1997, twelve-year compulsory education was also proposed but only with the enactment of the law no 6287 “About the Amendments to be made on the Law of Elementary Education and Some Laws”, 12-year compulsory education was initiated throughout the country on 11.04.2012.

### ***Compulsory Education***

In accordance with the law no. 6287 “About the Amendments to be made on the Law of Elementary Education and Some Laws” put into effect on 30.03.2012, the present compulsory education in the country are organized at three levels (4+4+4) as a total of 12 years. The first four years of this 12-year compulsory period are spent in the elementary school, the second four years are spent in the secondary school and the third four years are spent in the high school. The first four-year period (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th grades) is called elementary school, the second four-year period (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grades) is called secondary school and the third-year period (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th grades) is called high school.

### ***Elementary Education***

#### ***Elementary Schools***

The elementary schools cover a four-year period of the 12-year compulsory education. In the history of Turks, elementary school-like organizations first appeared when they embraced Islam mostly close to mosques and then such educational organizations developed more during the Seljuk and Ottoman eras (Gelişli, 2002) lying the basis of elementary schools in the Republic era. Throughout the history of the Republic, in different periods, the duration of compulsory education spent in elementary education changed, first it became five years, then after 1997 it was increased to eight years (Gelişli, 2005) and then after 2012 decreased to four years.

The first decision to start eight-year compulsory elementary education was made in 1971-1972 school year; yet, it could only be put into effect in 1997. As not enough preparation was made for this transformation, many problems were experienced in the implementation of eight-year compulsory elementary education. But, these problems could be solved in relatively short time and the system was established (Gelişli, 2005).

With the amendment made in 2012, the elementary education was divided into two parts and the duration of elementary school was set to be four years. In accordance with the law no. 6287, it was stipulated that 66-month or older children should enroll in elementary school but then it was changed and the elementary school beginning age was raised. For this elementary school period of

four years, relatively lighter programs were developed for students. The main objectives of this elementary school period are to impart reading, writing, basic math and adaptation-to-life skills to students.

#### *Secondary Schools*

Previously, secondary schools used to cover a three-year period following the five-year elementary school period. Up to 1997, secondary schools were independent of elementary schools in their educational and instructional activities. Then in 1997, the elementary education was determined to be eight years; thus, elementary schools were combined with secondary schools under the roof of elementary education. This continued up to 2012, when the compulsory education was organized at three levels (4+4+4) to cover a twelve-year period and then secondary schools again became independent schools.

The main goal of secondary schools (second level of elementary education) is to train students as free individuals knowing how to live in compliance with the rules of civic society and democratic state. Secondary schools also aim to offer vocational training or training to nurture the existing skills of students. Therefore, many elective courses are offered at secondary schools. These elective courses include the areas of Religious and Moral Values, Turkish Language, Foreign Language, Natural Sciences, Arts, Sports and Social Sciences. Each student can select any course from any of these areas but these elective courses cannot be more than eight-class hours a week. In secondary schools, students have the right to select which elective courses they want.

#### *Secondary Education (High schools)*

The establishment of high schools in Turkey dates back to 1868, when Galatasaray Sultanisi was established and then such schools were renamed as high schools during the Republic era with the enactment of the Law on Unification of Education on 3 March 1924. Giving at least four-year education as a continuation of secondary schools, high schools also include vocational and technical high schools. High schools can be classified as General High Schools, Anatolian High Schools, Science High Schools, Anatolian Religious High School, Anatolian Fine Arts High School, Evening High Schools, and Private High Schools.

The main objectives of general high schools are to train students as individuals having a certain level of general culture, knowing the problems of the society and who can contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the country and to prepare them for higher education.

Within the reconstruction of the secondary education, the duration of education in high schools was determined to be four years with the decision no. 184 of The Board of Education and Discipline on 7 June 2005 as of 2005-2006 school year and this four-year high school period started at the ninth grade. In 2013, with the initiation of 4+4+4 system, all the general high schools were converted into Anatolian high schools.

#### *The Compulsory Education System in the Azerbaijan Republic*

Azerbaijan is one of the Turkic states having gained its independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. It is located in the south of Caucasus and the west of the Caspian Sea. It is an independent Turkic state having a democratic and secular regime.

Since having gained its independence in 1991, the most effective applications determining the form and functioning of the education system have been put into force by the presidency and the legislative organs. Important steps have been taken in Azerbaijan to change the general structure of the education system remaining from the Soviet Union era, to carry out a legislative reform and to modernize education (Samadova, 2015; Asian Development Bank, 2004). However, the traces of the structural model of the old system can still be seen in the current education system.

According to the 1992 Constitution, all the citizens have the right to have education. The state provides free educational services at the general level of education and instruction for all of its citizens and the education system is under the control of the state (Asian Development Bank, 2004).

### ***Compulsory Education***

In Azerbaijan, the education law was passed in 1992 and with this law, the structure of the education system and duties and responsibilities of all the personnel working within the education system were defined. In this law, the objectives of education, duties to be fulfilled at each level and reforms were defined. Within this law, a new regulation was made to increase the compulsory education from nine years to eleven years. With the 42th article of the 1995 Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic, education right of each citizen was put under protection of the state and the compulsory education was declared to be offered by the state free of charge (Samadova, 2015; Asian Development Bank, 2004).

According to the education law passed in Azerbaijan in 1992 and amendments made in 1995 to the law, the compulsory education was organized at three levels (4+5+2) as a total of 11 years. The first nine years are named as the general education and the last two years as high school (Savaş, 2009).

### ***General Education Schools (Compulsory Education)***

In the Azerbaijan education system, the compulsory education is called as the general secondary education. The general secondary education is comprised of three levels, which are elementary education, general secondary education and complete secondary education and the general secondary education starts at the age of six. The general secondary education is given on the basis of some specific educational programs. In the country, the general secondary education is generally given at general education schools, in particular at specialization-oriented schools, gymnasiums, high schools, elementary and secondary vocational schools and at colleges and higher education institutions as well (<http://www.azerbaijans.com>).

### ***Elementary schools***

In the Azerbaijan Republic, students start elementary schools at the age of six and go on attending these schools for four years. The objectives of elementary schools are to impart information and skills required for reading, writing, calculating and students to adapt to the social life, to teach them the protection of nature, logical reasoning and to develop their skills to help them to know their aesthetic, artistic and some other characteristics. Elementary schools provide instruction on the basis of an educational program designed considering the developmental characteristics of students (<http://www.azerbaijans.com>).

### ***The second level in the general secondary education (Secondary schools)***

The secondary education in Azerbaijan operates in compliance with the Constitution of Azerbaijan Republic, the related decrees, decisions and directives, the Charter of the Ministry of Education and some other related official documents. The main developmental priorities of the general education are determined by the democratization of management in the field of education and by the promotion of independence of educational and instructional institutions, their entrepreneurship, innovativeness, development and accountability. In the secondary schools of the Azerbaijan Republic, besides Azerbaijani Turkish, Russian, English, French, German, Talysh language, Avar, Lezgian, Hebrew, Khinalug, Udi language and Kurdish are offered as electives (<http://www.azerbaijans.com>).

The second level of the general secondary education is a five-year process expanding from the fifth grade to ninth grade. In the Azerbaijan Republic, the general secondary education is compulsory. The students completing secondary schools are given a general secondary education diploma. To be able to progress through the higher levels of education, the secondary education



diploma is a pre-requisite. The primary objectives of the general secondary education are to shape students' speaking, writing and communication skills, mental activity and logical thinking; to enhance their knowledge and thinking about the school subjects in the education program and the evolution of the world civilization; to impart the skills necessary to use information-communications tools of the modern age to students and to develop their skills to evaluate events and make better decisions for future (<http://www.azerbaijans.com>).

#### *Complete secondary education (High schools)*

The full secondary education covers the final level of the general secondary education; that is, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. In order to complete this level, students' total competency is evaluated through a test. Depending on the test results, students who are successful are determined and they are given a high school diploma. This diploma is a pre-requisite to attend any institution of higher education.

The objectives of the complete secondary education are to enable students to actualize their abilities and talents; to prepare them for real life and career selection; to shape them as active citizens; to encourage them to respect national and global values, human rights and liberties and to be tolerant; to enable them to communicate in one or more foreign languages. The complete secondary education aims the complete mastery of the content of the educational programs of the three levels. At the complete secondary education level, students are given social, technical, scientific and environmental education and they are prepared for university (<http://www.azerbaijans.com>; Asian Development Bank, 2004). The complete secondary education was included in the compulsory education after 1995. Thus, the compulsory education was increased to eleven years (Savaş, 2009).

#### *Elementary and secondary vocational education*

Elementary vocational education enables students to develop their special skills and knowledge required to have a certain profession on the basis of the general secondary education. Elementary vocational education is given at the institutions of vocational education such as unions, labor markets, employment institutions and graduates are given their first professional titles.

Elementary vocational education relies on related vocational education programs. Students completing their elementary vocational education within the context of the general secondary education are given their professional certificates as well as their secondary education diplomas.

Secondary vocational education aims to provide the labor force for manufacturing and service sectors with the qualifications required by the society and the labor market on the basis of the general secondary education. Secondary vocational education can be given at colleges and higher education institutions in general. Students completing their secondary vocational education are considered to have completed their complete secondary education as well. The secondary vocational education diploma allows students to get a place at higher education institutions.

#### ***The Compulsory Education System in the Kazakhstan Republic***

Having gained its independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan is the Turkic Republic with the largest land area. It is located in the center of Asia extending from the east coasts of the Caspian Sea to China.

As in the other Central Asian countries, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, reforms have been made and new institutions have been established in the country. Following the independence, an economic crisis was experienced negatively affecting all the public services. Many teachers lost their jobs during the crisis (OSCE, 2003).

In 1996, a new state education policy was initiated with the efforts directed toward the management and financing of the education system with a decree of presidency. As a result of this reform process, a new state program was developed to achieve the educational targets of 2005, to

establish the conditions required for the effective development of the national model of the education system and to ensure wider access to quality education at each level of the education system (pre-school, elementary school, secondary general education, higher education, vocational education) (OSCE, 2003).

At the local level, education system in Kazakhstan is supervised and managed by the Ministry of National Education. The general secondary education is compulsory for every citizen aged at 6-17 years old. The formal education system includes pre-school education, general secondary education, secondary vocational education, secondary technical education and higher education (Asian Development Bank, 2004). All the schools in Kazakhstan are protected by the state and constitutional system.

### ***Compulsory Education***

The compulsory education is defined as the general secondary level covering an eleven-year period offered free of charge according to the constitution. Despite the general economic crises, Kazakhstan has managed to have a developed education system. The general education system has three levels, which are elementary education lasting for four years (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades), general secondary education lasting for five years (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades) and high school lasting for two years (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades). Thus, the compulsory education is 11 years in total. In recent years, new schools have been opened to give education in different fields. These schools are Gymnasiums, Special education general secondary schools, language and technical schools and high schools (<http://adilet.zan.kz>; Cited in Gelişli et al., 2016; OSCE, 2003). In compliance with the related articles of the constitution, the secondary education is compulsory and students should be prepared for different professions while attending the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, which improves their chance to find a job in different organizations (Savaş, 2009).

The Ministry of Science of Kazakhstan aimed to move into the education system of 4+4+4 up to 2015; however, twelve-year compulsory education has not been initiated yet. A pilot administration of twelve-year is still being conducted in 104 schools (45 village and 59 city schools) located in different regions of Kazakhstan to see its negative and positive aspects (<http://adilet.zan.kz>; Cited in Gelişli et al., 2016).

In general education institutions, a school year is organized as four terms. School year starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and ends on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. There are four semester holidays for students.

### ***General Secondary Education (Compulsory Education System)***

#### ***Elementary Schools***

In the Kazakhstan Republic, elementary schools cover the first four years of eleven-year compulsory education. Children are enrolled in elementary schools when they are 6 or 7 years old on the basis of their families' decisions. In this regard, families are supported by commissions made up of the medical and psychological counselors to test the readiness of children to start school. According to the Law No. 389-1 of Kazakhstan Education dated 07.06.1999, the objectives of elementary school education are to impart basic study skills to children and teach them life sciences; to provide them with opportunities to select schools and programs they will attend and books they will study and to promote their talents in line with their interests and skills. This level of education is free (Kazakhstan Respublikasındaki Bilim Turalı Zannama, 2003).

In the following years, further reforms were carried out in education and then the Law No. 597-II of Kazakhstan Education was put into effect on 09.07.2004 to regulate the education in Kazakhstan. According to this new law, the objectives of elementary educations were set as to impart the basic study skills and skills needed in real life to children; to provide them with opportunities to select schools and programs they will attend and books they will study and to promote their talents in line with their interests and skills.

According to the code of general secondary education, in elementary schools students are instructed for 34 class hours a week. At the elementary level, the rate of literacy is 100% in Kazakhstan. The number of students in an elementary school class is 24-26. When the gender of the elementary school teachers is examined, it is seen that 98.3% of them are female teachers. Thus, it can be argued that almost all of the elementary school teachers in Kazakhstan are women (<http://www.studycountry.com>).

In Kazakhstan, all the elementary schools are free for all the citizens. Parents may only pay to buy for extra materials required for courses such as sports, music and science laboratories or some other private activities (<http://www.studycountry.com>).

#### *General Secondary Education 1<sup>st</sup> Level (Secondary schools)*

The 1<sup>st</sup> level of the general secondary education covers 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. This level is the general education level similar to secondary schools in other countries. These schools can be opened next to elementary schools or far away from them. They apply a program similar to the one applied in elementary schools but more sophisticated to enhance the basic skills. For instance, in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades, there are courses of math, general science, social sciences, Russian or Kazakh language arts and physical education (<http://www.studycountry.com>).

#### *General Secondary Education 2<sup>nd</sup> Level (High schools)*

The 2<sup>nd</sup> level of the general secondary education lasts for two years including 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. This level is the general education level similar to high schools in other countries. Its program is similar to that of secondary schools but more advanced aiming to develop basic and scientific skills. For example, advanced courses of Kazakh, Russian and World Literature, History, Algebra (other advanced math issues) Physics, Biology, Chemistry are given in these schools (<http://www.studycountry.com>).

#### ***The Compulsory Education System in the Kyrgyzstan Republic***

Having gained its independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kyrgyzstan is the Turkic State with the smallest land area and population. It is one of the central countries of Asia having borders with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China. High majority of its population is Kyrgyz but as in all the other Turkic republics, there are Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Turkish and Tajik ethnic groups (Mertaugh, 2004).

In the late 1990s, the Ministry of National Education and Culture of the Kyrgyzstan Republic was established to organize and manage education within the newly constructed administrative system of the Republic. Though the idea of decentralization in education seemed to be accepted in general, the reconstruction of the education system resulted in a centralized management of education. Now, the educational institutions; like other institutions, are managed in a highly centralized, bureaucratic and authoritarian system. Schools are managed by school directors. In fact, important efforts were being made to strengthen educational institutions by the local administrations during the Soviet era. It is likely that the central government adopted this centralized management and planning approach to maintain the control in regions (Polat, 2011).

Having gained its independence in 1991, the new Kyrgyz State administered new policies to build Kyrgyz identity. During this identity construction period, schools were viewed to be important institutions to socialize the community. In this regard, school type, ethnic identity-based composition of students at schools, decision-making mechanisms in operation in education or schools, formal program, hidden curricula, teachers, textbooks and extra-curricular activities were regarded to be of great importance. Having internalized the values promoted in the education system of the Soviet era, Kyrgyz people encountered an important problem. This was how the educational policies of the Kyrgyz State would be shaped, which values would be emphasized by these policies and how the Kyrgyz identity would be built. In this connection, with the education policies



administered, it was intended to construct the position of the individual within the society. In this way, it was aimed to inculcate values, attitudes and behaviors expected by the society in children. With the function it serves within the political socialization process, the school acts like a simulation of the social order. It is believed that the success of the established order at the school with teachers, textbooks, workbooks, in-class and extracurricular activities will have positive reflections on after-school lives of students (Beşirli & Ünal, 2015).

The content and structure of the education in Kyrgyzstan were first determined with the 1992 Constitution. The last regulations concerning the education were made on 30 April 2003. However, though new constitutions were made later, the regulations concerning the education in the 1992 Constitutions were not changed much. In the 32<sup>nd</sup> Article of the 1992 Constitutions, issues related to the education are explained as follows (Polat, 2011).

1. Each citizen of the Kyrgyzstan has the right to receive education.
2. Basic education is compulsory and free.
3. Each citizen has the right to receive free education at the education institutions of the state.
4. The state prepares the conditions for all citizens to receive vocational, basic, secondary and higher education on the basis of their abilities.
5. Citizens can receive paid education from state and private education institutions on the basis of the principles and conditions stated in laws.
6. Inspection of the educational institutions in the country is conducted by the government agencies.

First regulations concerning the education whose basic principles are stated in the constitution above were made with the law no. 1074-XII passed on 16 October 1992. In 1996, some amendments were made to the education-related regulations stated in the 1992 Constitution and thus a new National Education program was formed (Polat, 2011).

### ***Compulsory Education System***

According to Kyrgyz Education Law, all the Kyrgyz citizens have the right to receive free education from the state schools. The language of education is Kyrgyz. In all schools, Kyrgyz, Russian and a foreign language must be taught. In Kyrgyzstan, the compulsory education is 11 years. The Kyrgyz education system includes pre-school education for 1 to 6 years old children, elementary education lasting for four years, the first level of secondary education extending from fifth grade to ninth grade, the second level of secondary education lasting two years including 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades and higher education (Mertaugh, 2004).

The general secondary education has a three-level structure. The general secondary education is compulsory consisting of elementary education or the first level of basic education, secondary education or the second level of basic education and high school education or complete secondary education. High school education is given by different institutions (Polat, 2011; OSCE, 2003; <http://biskek.meb.gov.tr>; <http://education.stateuniversity.com>; <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu>).

According to data obtained for the 2014-2015 school year, there are 1062 pre-school education institutions and 152.216 pre-school children attending these institutions and 5116 pre-school teachers; there are 2.205 secondary education institutions educating 1.043.629 students and 72938 teachers working (<http://biskek.meb.gov.tr>).

### ***Elementary Schools (Basic Education)***

Elementary education or the first level of basic education is four years. This level including 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades is for children aged 6-11 years old. Its objectives can be summarized as follows: teaching students reading and writing and four math operations; developing thinking power, teaching how to control behaviors, teaching well-mannered conversation and social norms (Polat,

2011; <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu>). The main goal of basic education is to make students acquire basic skills.

#### *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Level of Basic Education (Secondary Schools)*

The general secondary education or the second level of basic education is five years (5-9 grades) and for students aged at 11-15 years old. The objectives at this level are to help students adapt to general education programs; to adopt school rules and to increase their motivation for education. At this level, considering students' tendencies, desires and abilities, students are directed to find their identities. At the same time, one of the main objectives is to teach students how to adapt to social life. After completing basic education, students are given a diploma (Polat, 2011; <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu>).

#### *Complete Secondary Education (High Schools)*

The complete secondary education or high school education lasts for two years including 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. Students aged at 15-17 years old attend this level of education. The complete secondary education is the last stage of the general education. The main objective in this level is to prepare students for higher education. The educational applications conducted in this level are designed to lay the ground for university education (Polat, 2011; <http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu>).

#### ***Vocational Education***

The main objective of the vocational education given in the elementary, secondary and higher vocational education institutions is to train qualified ***labor force to meet the needs of the country***.

#### ***Elementary vocational education***

The main objective of the vocational education is to train qualified workers in line with the needs of the country. The elementary vocational education is embedded in the general education. For some technical professions, specific programs were designed within the general education or the vocational education. In some specific cases, vocational education can be given to people not having the basic education for them to have a job (Polat, 2011).

The elementary vocational education is given in the institutions of vocational education approved by the state. This education can be given in institutions of training for special risks, organizations, education departments of some institutions and organizations, vocational education institutions and some other private institutions (<http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu>, Polat, 2011).

#### *Secondary vocational education*

The main objective of the secondary vocational education is to meet the need for specialization in certain professional areas. The institutions of secondary vocational education conduct training programs in many different professional fields (Polat, 2011). The secondary vocational education is given by colleges, teknikums and vocational schools. The secondary vocational education continues for a total of six years, four of which are spent in secondary education and two are spent in high school education (<http://www.bibl.u-szeged.hu>).

#### ***The Compulsory Education in the Republic of Uzbekistan***

In the middle age, Uzbekistan developed as the science and culture center of the Islamic world and produced scholars and philosophers such as Al- Farabi and İbn Sina and famous leaders such as Uluğ Bey, Nawaiy, Babür Şah and Tamerlane. One of the Central Asian republics having gained its independence from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan proclaimed its independence on 1 September 1991. It is one of the leading cotton producers in the world and possesses large reserves of gold and other valuable minerals. Uzbekistan is located in the central part of the Central Asia and bordered by Kazakhstan on the north, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan on the south and Kyrgyzstan on the southeast.

With the 41<sup>st</sup> article of the Uzbek constitution, the right to receive education is granted to all citizens. The state also guarantees free secondary education for all of its citizens but in return for this, serious responsibilities are put on the shoulders of the citizens (Lütfullaeva et al., 1996:10; Cited in Eyüpoğlu, 2004). The main objective of education is to train students in line with the state ideology. Students should develop physically and spiritually, enhance their knowledge base, be active in class, use technology, conduct analyses and compare their prior knowledge with the newly learned information (Azizhodcaeva, 2002: 5; Cited in Eyüpoğlu, 2004). The first education law was passed in 1992 and then its renewed form was put into effect in 1997. In this law, the role of the state in education is emphasized and great importance is attached to human rights and democracy education (Azizhodcaeva, 2002: 17; Cited in Eyüpoğlu, 2004).

According to the Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the education system is organized to include pre-school education, the first level of general education (elementary school), general education (five years), the second level of general education (high schools) and higher education. The second level of general education includes both vocational high school and general high schools (UNDP, 2005; <http://www.classbase.com>).

### ***Compulsory Education System***

According to the education law passed in 1997, the compulsory education was increased from 11 years to 12 years as of the 1998/99 school year and is free. The compulsory education is comprised of the first level of elementary education or basic education lasting four years (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades) and offered for children aged at 6-11 years old; general secondary education or the second level of basic education (secondary school) covering a five-year period (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades) for children aged at 10-15 years old and high school education or complete secondary education extending over a three-year period (10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) for students aged at 15-17 years old. High school education is given in different educational institutions (UNDP, 2005; <http://www.classbase.com>).

### ***The First Level of General Education (Elementary schools)***

The first level of general education is four years. Students start this level when they are 6 years old and complete when they are 10. The main objectives at this level are to teach reading and writing and to impart basic math skills to students. Moreover, students are also instructed about how to think theoretically, skills necessary for self-control, how to protect their health, socialize and maintain a healthy life (UNDP, 2005; <http://www.classbase.com>).

### ***The Secondary Level of General Education (Secondary schools)***

The first five years of the general secondary education (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades) are for students aged at 10-15 years old. At this level, the main objectives are to enhance students' basic knowledge and skills and independent thinking skills and to impart organizational skills and practical experiences to students. At this level, science education is systematically given. Sciences are started to be directly taught (UNDP, 2005; <http://www.classbase.com>).

### ***General Secondary Education (High schools)***

It includes the second level of general secondary education (high schools), lasts for three years and is offered to 15-17 years old students. At this level, there are academic high schools and vocational colleges. Academic high schools generally prepare students for university. In compliance with the implemented education model, the system of secondary and private vocational education gives secondary and vocational education. In private educational institutions offering vocational education, basic vocational education is given (UNDP, 2005; <http://www.classbase.com>; Asian Development Bank, 2004; OSCE, 2003; UNDP, 2008).

### ***Compulsory Education in the Republic of Turkmenistan***

The Republic of Turkmenistan is a Turkic Republic of Central Asia having gained its independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. It is bordered by Kazakhstan on the north, Uzbekistan on the east, Iran and Afghanistan on the south and the Caspian Sea on the west. Turkmenistan is a member of organizations such as BM, İKÖ, BDT, IMF.

After gaining its independence, the country entered into a reform process and as a result, the education system has continuously changed. First some regulations were made to change the ideology remaining from the Soviet system in the education. However, these reforms lost their effects over time. The main reason for this was that not enough resources were allocated to education by the governments. The education sector was not seen as a priority; instead, relatively greater importance was attached to language policies. As the textbooks were not written in Turkmen language, a conflict was experienced with the language policy and in addition to this, lack of school buildings and equipment's led to emergence of serious problems in education (OSCE, 2003).

Though in general the Turkmen education system has a centralized structure, local policies are allowed to some extent. The educational institutions of Turkmenistan are managed and financed by the state and the compulsory education is free. The responsibility for the education is on the shoulders of the Ministry of National Education (<http://countrystudies.us/turkmenistan/>).

In Turkmenistan, teaching of spiritual values is regarded to be essential for social, economic and cultural development. In this regard, the main objective of the education is to train individuals having acquired national and traditional values. The state aims to construct a national education system at international standards.

### ***The Compulsory Education System***

In the 1992 constitution, the compulsory education was declared to be a free basic right for all the citizens. According to the education law passed in 1993, the main principle adopted by the state is the provision of free education at every level of schooling at state schools and equal opportunities for individuals to develop their personal talents. The 13<sup>th</sup> Article of the law states that the compulsory education called as general education is nine years. The state should provide free textbooks, health services and transportation services for students (UNESCO, 2011).

In 1993, with the enactment of the education law, the compulsory education was determined to last for nine years; yet, with some amendments made to the law in 2002, it was increased to ten years. The compulsory education has two levels. In the first level, there are elementary schools aiming to teach reading, writing and basic math skills to students within a three-year period. Yet, the elementary education given at elementary schools attended by Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek students is four years. The second level is called general secondary education including 4<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades and focusing on science education. The general secondary education given to Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek students on the other hand covers 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grades. In the 2007-2008 school year, school starting age was determined to be 7 and the compulsory education was increased to ten years, elementary education was constituted by 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grades and general secondary education was constituted by 4-9<sup>th</sup> grades (UNESCO, 2011; OSCE, 2003). In 2009, the new education law was passed and the education given throughout the compulsory education was made free. According to this law, the education has six levels, which are pre-school education, elementary education, secondary education, vocational education, university and graduate education. With the laws no. 4610 and 8465, the compulsory education was increased from nine years to ten years (UNESCO, 2011).

The President Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedov signed the decree "About the Development of Science in Turkmenistan" in 2013. In accordance with this decree, the compulsory education was

increased to 12 years as of the 2013-2014 school year and some new courses were added to the curriculum (<http://www.turkiye-turkmenistan.com>).

According to this new regulation, the secondary education is the compulsory education for students aged at 6-18 years old and is comprised of elementary school, secondary school and high school. The secondary education is given in a single building. It is 12 years. The secondary education consists of elementary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades) for students aged at 6-10 years old, secondary school (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> grades) for students aged at 11-16 years old, general high school (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) for students aged at 17-18 years old.

The compulsory education is free. All the expenses (building, running expenses, personnel etc.) are met by the state. Each child completing kindergarten education and becoming six years old must enroll in the secondary education. School enrollment starts on 1 June and ends on 15 August.

#### ***Second level secondary education***

The high school education in which students are divided into branches includes 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades (17-18 years old). In these grades, branch teachers teach the courses. School subjects such as Turkmen language, social and natural sciences, foreign languages, sports and arts are taught. All the courses are required, there is no elective course. Students completing their high school education are granted a high school diploma. This education prepares students for domestic and international universities. There are three fields of study, which are Physics-Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences.

In Turkmenistan, students completing their general secondary education can receive academic education or vocational and technical education. After completing the tenth grade, students take the centralized state exams and according to exam results, they can attend advanced vocational-technical high schools and study for 2-3 years. Students completing these vocational schools obtain the right to take university entrance exam (UNESCO, 2011; OSCE, 20003; Savaş, 2009).

#### **Results and Discussion**

In all of the Turkic Republics, developments in the field of education are continuing, for example, since 2000, all the states have aimed to enhance the school enrollment opportunities and gender equality for socio-economic development, social commitment and national welfare. In this regard, important attempts have been made. Since mid-1990s, the states have implemented some reforms to develop innovative curricula and educational institutions, improve the wages and life standards of teachers and diversify their economic and social finances so that centralized management structure could be established in education (OSCE, 2003).

In the first decade of their independence, though some positive reforms were carried out, significant problems were experienced in education of all the Turkic republics. For example, equal and universal opportunities in education could not be offered, decrease was observed particularly in female students' attendance to school, the budget allocated to education decreased and shortages of qualified teachers, textbooks and school facilities were experienced (OSCE, 2003). However, up to 2016, important developments were observed and many of these problems were solved. International relations and cooperation were improved and thus, international agreements in the field of education were signed leading to many positive developments in education. Particularly within the context of the cooperation formed with Turkey, structural reforms in education were made.



**Table 1: Schooling rates and ages in the compulsory education in the Turkic republics**

Countries	Compulsory education age ranges	Elementary education completion rate by children at the age of compulsory education 2010–14	The rate of literacy for youth aged at 15–24 years old 2005–14
Azerbaijan	6-16	98	100
Kazakhstan	6-17	113	100
Kyrgyzstan	6-17	105	100
Turkmenistan	6-18	-	100
Turkey	6-18	100	99
Uzbekistan	6-17	96	100

Source: World Development Indicators 2016, Classified according to World Bank analytical grouping

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that on the basis of the data provided by the World Bank for 2010-2014 period, in all of the Turkic republics, the compulsory education has been completed by all the children at the age of compulsory education. It is also seen that the rate of literacy among the young people aged as 15-24 is hundred percent; only in Turkey it is 99%. This shows that the target of compulsory education has been achieved in the Turkic republics. Of course, the effect of the education system and quality of education established during the Soviet era should not be overlooked. Despite all the reform and nationalization efforts, the effect of the Soviet education system is still felt (OSCE, 2003; UNESCO, 2011; Asian Development Bank, 2004; Savaş, 2009).

Educational works have been conducted in Turkey and the other Turkic republics in cooperation. The ministries of national education of these countries and The Turkic Academy work in cooperation to develop common curricula on some parts of Turkic history and languages.

**Table 2: The Compulsory Education Systems in the Turkic Republics**

Level of Education	Turkey	Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan	Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
Elementary school	4	4	4	4	3	4
Secondary school	4	5	5	5	5	6
High school	4	2	2	3	3	2
Total	12	11	11	12	11	12

Sources: UNESCO-IAU (<http://www.unesco.org/iau/cd-data>; UNESCO, Statistic Yearbook 1999; (<http://www.uis-unesco.org/en/stats/statistics/yearbook/tables/ed.htm>).

In the Turkic republics, the compulsory education generally involves two or three levels. In general, the compulsory education lasts for 11 or 12 years including children aged at 6-18 years old. In the first level of this process, the main objectives are generally to teach reading, writing and basic skills of mathematics and how to adapt to social life. In the second and third levels of the compulsory education, the main objectives are to give general science education, to impart the cultural of the society to students and to prepare them for university education. Though some

differences are observed in elementary school applications in the Turkic republics, they were constructed in a similar manner and period; yet, when the second level is considered, the system of Turkey is different from those of the other Turkic republics. While the education system of Turkey was built on the western European model, the education systems of the other Turkic republics were shaped under Soviet influence. According to Polat (2001), there is a need for a reform in this regard. However, this is a very comprehensive and expensive issue and it is clear that the economic and social infrastructures of the countries are not powerful enough to do so.

**Table 3: The extents to which the Turkic republics achieved their schooling, adult literacy and gender equality targets for 2015**

Targets	Azerbaijan	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan	Turkey	Turkmenistan
The extent to which pre-school education targets were achieved	< %30	% 30-%60	< %30	< %30	% 30-%60	There is no sound data to evaluate
The extent to which elementary education targets were achieved	% 80-94	% 95	%95	There is no sound data to evaluate	% 95	There is no sound data to evaluate
The rate of literacy in adult population	% 95	% 95	%95	% 95	% 95	% 95
The extent to which gender equality was established in elementary education	% 95	% 95	%95	% 95	% 95	There is no sound data to evaluate

Source: UNESCO. (2014); EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2013-2014; UNESCO Publishing

As can be seen in Table 3, the schooling rate in pre-school education is about 30 % in all of the Turkic republics and this seems to be a low rate of pre-schooling. In terms of compulsory education, great majority of the students who are at the age of compulsory education attend compulsory education in all the Turkic republics and the lowest rate of attendance is seen in Azerbaijan (80-94 %). The rate of literacy among adult population is high in all the countries and as a result of the reforms made in the recent years, the gender equality seems to be better in future.

### Conclusion

As a conclusion, it was observed in the current study that the compulsory education has two or three levels in the Turkic republics. The compulsory education generally lasts for 11-12 years and for children aged at 6-18 years old. Elementary schools in the Turkic republics are usually four years and aim to teach reading, writing and basic math skills to students and prepare them for social life.

In the second and third levels of the compulsory education, a similar structure in education system is seen in the Turkic republics and they are usually structured as the first level of the general secondary education continuing five years and the second level of the secondary education continuing two years. In Turkey, however, the general secondary education has two levels, each

lasting four years. In general secondary education, the main objectives were found to be to give general science education, to impart the culture of the society to students and to prepare them for higher education in all the Turkic republics.

### Suggestions

In light of the findings of the current study, following suggestions can be made;

1. In the Turkic republics, a senior education commission or a special education commission should be established so that short-term and long-term common education policies should be determined. At each level of education, common programs should be developed and implemented in line with the political and cultural characteristics of the countries.
2. For the unity of language, a common alphabet should be used.
3. By sharing their experiences, the Turkic republics can improve the standards of their education to be able to compete with the world.
4. The compulsory education in the Turkic republics should be accredited so that the diploma taken from one republic should be recognized in the others.
5. Student and teacher exchange programs should be promoted between the republics.

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